

The Oxford Democrat.

VOLUME 45.

PARIS, MAINE, TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 1878.

NUMBER 24.

The Oxford Democrat

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY.

GEO. H. WATKINS,
Editor and Proprietor.

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June 19, 77.

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Commissioners for Me. Notary Public.

TWITCHELL & EVANS,

Attorneys & Counsellors at Law,

GORHAM, N. H.

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Jan. 1, 77.

ENOCH FOSTER, JR.,

Attorney and Counsellor at Law,

Jan. 1, 77. Bethel, Me.

S. R. HUTCHINS,

Attorney and Counsellor at Law,

Jan. 1, 77. Rumford, Me.

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Attorney and Counsellor at Law,

FEVEREEN, ME.

Commissioner for New Hampshire, Jan. 17, 78.

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Jan. 1, 77. Buckfield, Oxford Co., Me.

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REAR FALLS, ME.

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Selected Story.

From Harper's Monthly, for June.
IN A STORM.

The rain was drizzling out of a damp heaven as if a cloud were driving toward us and breaking over us; the wind, which had risen at daylight, was swelling with every succeeding blast; and the river was rolling in white-caps. Still, there was no question of laying the boat by when our party from the hills came down and went aboard with much ado and merry-making.

The *Huntress* was a river craft that made connection at Desbars, the little port on the bay at the river's mouth, with the sea boat that would take us by a farther voyage to our journey's end. Indeed, the *Huntress* was not much of an affair anyway, and the accommodations were such that we all preferred to remain above, even in the rain, being well protected in gossamer rubber, high boots, and all the modern improvements. We were a gay party, who had been amusing ourselves, as traveling companions do, with reading and fancy-work, flirtation and scandal. Among others we numbered Mrs. Howison, the *doctress* of the party, who gave it eminent respectability; kept everybody up in his pedigree, and did the diamonds, as Belle Evans said; Belle herself, who did the beauty; Mrs. Cameron, her chaperon, and the mother of Lucia and John; Miss Marvin, an heiress struggling with idleness, whose money was possibly the loadstone of one or two youths who hung upon her verge, as Belle said, not of us, yet not against us.

Of the girls, Miss Evans was, perhaps, the most beautiful, yet Miss Murray, with her clear, dark, colorless face, and the great gray eyes, faultless features, and dark hair, and with her manner of proud reserve, stimulated curiosity and interest considerably more. Tall, and perhaps too stately, with her silence and her haughty ways, she impressed us as one with a history; yet when I had been with her one day more than usual, Mrs. Howison begged to assure me that people often lost caste by associating with the commonplace, and that Miss Murray was only Mrs. Cameron's companion, engaged to relieve Lucia from the trouble of reading and playing to her mother. "Not one of us at all, my dear, but a few steps above the servants," said the good Dame Howison. "She is an excellent person in her place, but Mrs. Cameron herself knows next to nothing about her, although she has employed her for nearly six years; so, you see, my dear," said the *doctress*. And her authority perhaps added a sting to the general behavior of the maids and matrons in this regard.

Yet Belle Evans was also not without interest to the impartial view, the more as she carried on a love affair and a flirtation at the same time, her engagement with John Cameron having lately been broken, and her heart with it, it was understood, which fragmentary condition of her system she was supposed to be concealing by the disguise of pleasure in Colonel Bates's society. Colonel Bates being the next friend of John Cameron himself. As for Lucia, Miss Marvin, and the rest, doubtless some portion of the world would have missed them had they suddenly dropped out of it. Such as we were, we had passed some pleasant days together, for even although Belle, every day more distracting, drove Cameron to the beginning of despair by her behavior with Colonel Bates—who was blindly convinced that he only did his tried good service in keeping her from worse mischief—and Cameron reduced Belle to the same pass by the exasperating indifference with which he viewed her conduct, yet such sweet sorrow seemed better to them apparently than any common experience of joy, and they did their best to prolong and accentuate it. "It is better than a novel; it is as good as a play," said I once to Miss Murray, for in spite of Dame Howison, we had some taken to each other, "for here are the actors living and real before you," and I remember catching her eye again when she smiled despite herself at these side scenes, although somewhat too indignant concerning the shrubs and blossoms with which young Black was loading her just then to smile at all.

"You look like Birnam Wood," Belle had cried.

"And feel as if Dunsinane were at the ends of the earth," she had answered.

And Sally Marvin, then looking Miss Murray over from head to foot, talked afterward to Lucia, as she always did on such opportunity, with an odd sort of insolent laughter between the syllables—the color came to Miss Murray's face; but she never noticed anything of the kind, not even thanking Belle for a glance when the latter resented her affronts. It was not frequently, indeed, that she was positively affronted, but commonly that she was completely ignored. It seemed to make small odds to her. She reminded you of some one who, being in life, must get through it, but looked for no pleasure in it, scorning the disdain of women, and indifferent to the admiration of men. Not so Belle. Pleasure and she were not separable terms. The little creature was like some fly sporting in the sun; but let the beam fade, and she would fall. It did not seem, however, as if Cameron were absolutely necessary to the composition of that sunbeam. The distinction between the girls could hardly

have been pointed better than it was by an adventure that befell them, when they were found, in one of our mountain rambles, in answer to Belle's agonized and repeated shrieks, clinging together on a scrap of ledge at the foot of a slippery steep, and holding to life by a branch that alone saved them from falling the dreadful depth of the chasm below, while from a cranny of the ledge a snake lifted its head, looking them full in the face. Trembling and crying and all unstrung, Belle was helped out of danger in the midst of her shrieks; but Margaret lingered, as Colonel Bates and young Black grasped her wrist from above, to have one look down at the dark abyss. And although Belle was treated as a compound of heroine and martyr, crying and shivering and laughing by turns as she was the rest of the day, and declaring that she thought the face of that snake was the face of the Great Enemy himself, yet the other went about her duties quietly and unnoted as before, it being somehow recognized by tacit consent that, no matter how the affair had ended, it would have made small difference to Miss Murray.

Colonel Bates now folded her wraps more closely about Belle under the awning of the little steamer's deck, and sat beside her, while Cameron stalked up and down, with his hat slouched round his ears, and his cigar smoke surrounding him in a cloud, and Miss Murray leaned over the stern, safe and dry in her waterproof garments, moodily watching the dark and churning water through which the *Huntress* had labored, or the steep shores that, if sunshine clothed them in beauty, foul weather made only frowning and forbidding.

We had expected to reach Desbars by noon, but, owing to the increasing storm, it was long past noon when the way widening into the bay, the town appeared, a darker spot on the dark horizon, which, after balancing of pros and cons, it was judged unsafe for the little steamer to approach, and the *Huntress* came to anchor out in the bay, shut in by a world of mist and rain, pitching up and down, with her head to the gale, there to remain till the tide turned, there being a difference of more than twenty feet in the turning of the tide in that bay.

Of course it was not long before the distress of the party, between hunger and seasickness and horror of the night in that little cabin, caused other plans to be considered; and presently it was announced that those who would were to be taken ashore in boats, where a dwelling could receive them till conveyances to town were found. To be sure, neither Miss Marvin nor Lucia could think of such a thing as being slung over the rail into the boats that came sliding down the side of a billow, and they screamed, and shut their eyes, and were slung over; as for Belle, she was so seasick she did not care what became of her, and never knew whether Colonel Bates or John Cameron held her; two of the dowagers made the plunge with the equipage due their weight; Miss Murray and I slid to our seats helped only by an old sailor; the rest remained on board; and presently the *Huntress* was only a blot in the mist, and a dark line was taking shape and rising before us, while the rain was shipping round us in wet sheets. As the boats were beached, we saw long fields of brown, slippery sea-weed, through which we were to wade to the old Sea House—a strange mansion built of the broken stone of the beach, looking half a prison and half a mad-house, falling to decay, as well as it could be seen through the storm.

"And so it is," said the captain, who had gone ashore with us, and supported me. "The master of the house is a strange creature, speaking to few but his servants—mad, maybe, or has been mad."

He married a girl, they say, who had another lover, but whose mother compelled her, under bad threats. She never saw him till he came with the parson. She escaped from the house that night and drowned herself, they think. And the man came down here, bought this place, and perishes with remorse, they say. But his house is always open on the side of the sea," said the captain, jerking out the sentences of his deep bass with the rain in his teeth. "He and his men tend on the wrecks, and there's many of them on this ugly bit of water. He thinks death by drowning is pretty bad, I guess. There he comes now."

The rain was driving like fine needles horizontally in our faces, and the wind was all we could make way against. The captain had Mrs. Howison on one side and me on the other; Miss Murray was close behind, and the struggling groups followed with shrieks and laughs that the wind blew down their throats, Belle every now and again sitting down on the wet sea-weed, telling everybody to go on and let her die there, but presently making up her mind to face the storm again; and we had another long field of the ankle-deep sea-weed to cross.

"Yes, there he comes," cried the captain. "How are you, Mr. Bassett? Any shelter for these wave-worn mariners at Sea House? We are not wrecked, but gone before, you see."

And to make matters worse, at the moment, as if nature at last gave way, Miss Murray fell over and fainted.

Mr. Bassett, however, had caught her, the others too tired from their tussle with the storm to be of service; but he lifted her and carried her across his shoulder as though she had been a child, turning

and leading the way up to his gates. He was a powerful fellow in every inch of his stature—a dark, nagalony, black-bearded Boanerges, I thought, in the glance I had before the compelling tempo bowed my head again, and felt in the deep rolling tones with which he ordered his men to march before and break the force of the gale from those directly behind them. But he bowed his head to no blast, and seemed a tower of strength before us there. Nor did he look over his shoulder when, just at the gate, Mrs. Cameron's cry rang out as she slipped and fell, and obliged her son to emulate Mr. Bassett's example. But in the shadow of the porch Mr. Bassett turned, and the rain drops sparkling on his beard and on his thick black eye-lashes, lifting his hat from the low brow, white, I saw, under the ebon masses of hair, certainly his whole strange face strangely transfigured. "Welcome to Sea House all!" he said, and passed on, winding his way through dark passages, where we lost sight of him as we followed the ringing sound of his steps. He paused in a little cabinet and laid his burden on a sofa there, first removing her wet wraps, and then disappearing to return with bandages and lotions for Mrs. Cameron's ankle. When he had made her comfortable on her improvised bed, in which task I assisted—by virtue of my place as old maid of the party, having been delegated to all the disagreeable duties—he went over to Miss Murray, who still lay on the sofa, silent and deathly white. But at the movement she opened her great gray eyes, dark from the rings of shadow surrounding them, slipped her feet to the floor, faltered a second, and then hastened to Mrs. Cameron's side, falling on her knees and clasping her, and breaking into hysterical sobs.

"Why, Miss Murray, Margaret, my poor child, it's nothing but a sprain!" cried Mrs. Cameron. "My dear, I never knew you cared for me so."

"I—I don't!" she exclaimed, rising impetuously. "I—"

But Mr. Bassett was before her. "I must forbid any excitement," he said, in those deep tones. "I will send a servant to attend to the patient. Pray consider yourself, madame, my welcome guest till your cure is complete. This young lady's room adjoins your own, across the passage."

"I shall stay with my mistress," said Miss Murray, suddenly, and without looking up.

He stopped and surveyed her, whether amazed, I wondered, that this haughty and ungracious young woman acknowledged herself a servant, or that she did it so proudly. But after the glance he only bowed. "Nevertheless, the room is at her disposal," he said, opening the doors which led to it, and presently leaving us together.

I went into the room, of course, and looked about me, for my cloak had not been thoroughly protecting, and the big fire blazing on the hearth there attracted me. The rest of the party were drying themselves elsewhere. Mrs. Cameron fell into a doze, and then Miss Murray came and stood on the hearth beside me. It was a large room, which evidently had been made more comfortable than the rest of the house for Mr. Bassett himself. A dark rug nearly covered it, thick curtains inclosed the windows, some old prints and portraits, probably bought with the house, I fancied, hung upon the wall; there was a huge jar of flowers, there were books and papers, and general paraphernalia. "It is his own room; look," said I.

"Oh, how shall I—I—oh, don't you see—" began Miss Murray; but just then Belle broke into the room, silencing herself at our hushing.

"How is she she half whispered. "In pain? Poor Mrs. Cameron! Asleep? How nice! Lucia takes it easily, doesn't she? Oh, Miss Twombly! oh, Miss Murray! This is just the queerest, dearest, loveliest old place—full of romance. It only we could stay here till Mrs. Cameron were quite well again! Just a little sprain. Why couldn't she—" But Belle interrupted herself just there. "He says we must," she went on. "But then, you know, of course we couldn't. It's a real adventure; and oh! isn't it delicious? At any rate we can't go while the storm lasts. Get down on your knees, Miss Murray, and pray that it shall last a week. Well, then, come and look at the other rooms—sliding panels, false doors, every-thing."

I followed her out. As I turned gently to close the door I saw Miss Murray throwing up her arms with a desperate gesture, and when I came back she stood leaning on the mantel, her head bowed, her fallen hair hanging over her clasped arms, the picture of dejection. What in the world did it mean? Since it was not concern for Mrs. Cameron, was it dementia? Had the storm and the exposure given her a fit of melancholy? Now I thought me, had there not always been something of insanity in the way in which she carried her eyes, looking down?

Meanwhile the house nearly justified Belle. One of any imagination might revel in the half flights, hidden staircases, and false entrances. It had originally been a government house, afterward becoming a tavern, and then, as a haunt for smugglers, it had been altered to their purposes; in the next generation it had been refitted with some sumptuousness as a family mansion. Although bareheaded now, the carpets had then

been rich and thick, and mantels and wainscots had been minutely carved and overlaid with a gilding but partially destroyed. What chance had left it in this state, as if a plague had fallen on the family and one and all were extinct, we could not imagine.

"Well," sighed Lucia, "we must make the most of this storm. I suppose ma'll have some of her absurd scruples about staying even over night, and she's bound to go to-morrow if she has to be carried. I know her. If only the others had all come too, and we had our trunks, just think of the masquerades and theatricals we could get up! What a house for a runaway match!"

"The Black Prince of the Forest, watching his chance, steps in behind Theodolinda with a withdrawing panel," cried Belle, "and clapping his shapely hand across her lovely lips, bears off—" and there I left them to their nonsense.

I began speaking of these capabilities of the house to Miss Murray when I rejoined her. "And it doesn't affect the romance for them at all," I said, "that all these secret passages were only for the handy hiding of smuggled brandy kegs and bales of silk."

To my consternation she looked up with a smothered cry of horror. I felt in the midst of an unknown tragedy. "And that was true, then?" she exclaimed. "Concealed doors, dark galleries—at no moment safe? Oh, they were tightening before—the toils. But now! but now!" and she paced the floor like a caged animal.

Certainly this is a mad-house, and this is a mad-house, I was saying to myself; but I learned what her self-control was when, at Mrs. Cameron's awakening moan in the opposite room, she sprang to her side, quiet as a nun, and learned, too, what Miss Murray's possibilities of beauty were, with that dark hair, usually bound so severely away, dropping now in rolling tresses about the cheeks where on a crimson stain seemed crushed. An hour afterward, during which we both composed our toilet, a servant announced dinner, saying she was to stay with Miss Cameron in our absence. "I can't go. Indeed, indeed, I can't," whispered Miss Murray. "It—it would—" Her words were cut short by Mr. Bassett himself, who, tapping on the door, entered, took Miss Murray's hand and placed it on his arm, and she went along as if to avoid a scene. It was, perhaps, to everybody's amazement that he led her to the head of the table, and sat her in the place opposite his own. But it really made no difference where anybody sat, except for the right and left of the host, as there was no carving to be done, and the servants handed every thing. Mr. Bassett had, I thought, sent into Desbars, storm or no storm, and enlarged his household according to his needs. Certainly a more princely dinner than that is seldom served, although with our wet weather gear we were a motley crew, and I could fancy Dame Howison lamenting that she dared not take her diamonds out of the cambric-leather bag round her neck, and put them on outside of her Scotch tweed.

Misanthropy was our host. He knew how to assume other roles; with a few light sentences he had set us all at ease at once, and he sparkled with jest and brilliant speech, drawing also from each some fit return, till we forgot the raging tempest without and that we were strangers within. Nor was he, as he sat at the table after all the exertions of the day, almost every moment of the latter part of which had been spent in making arrangements for our comfort, the shaggy and unkempt fellow who came out to give us shelter; dark and black-browed still he was, but a gentleman *jusqu'au bout des ongles*, a gentleman with perhaps just a dash of the gypsy. As for Miss Murray, her color coming and going cruelly, she lived through the dinner, playing with fork and spoon, and not tasting a morsel. As we rose informally from the table, and were passing out, he came to her side. "I have something to say to you," said he. But she turned, and caught my hand.

"No, no, you can have nothing to say to me," she gasped, and drew me swiftly away with her.

John Cameron followed us, finding his mother rested and refreshed and beginning to fidget, and as Lucia came flitting in, Belle directly added herself to the party.

"Did you ever know anything so queer," cried Lucia, "as his putting Miss Murray at the head of the table? And he treats her as if she were really—really—Oh, beg pardon, Miss Murray; I didn't see."

But Miss Murray did not vouchsafe her a glance, moving into the other room, still holding my hand, closing the door and bolting it. And I confess I trembled. "I shall never sleep a wink in this house," I thought. She dropped my hand and walked to the fire, where she stood silently a minute, then sat down beside it.

"I must tell you," she said. "You are kind. You can help me. I must get away from here now—from these people. I must go where I cannot be traced. But I have no friends—no money; and now he has found me, he will be always finding me. Wait!" she said, holding her throat as if the words choked her. "You don't know, you would never dream, but—but—I must tell you. Yes. Six years ago I was married. Ah! don't look so! We were in trouble—there had

been a defalcation. To hide it, my mother's plan was to marry me to the person whom my step-father had defrauded. He was a person from the South-sea Islands. Think of it! Just think of it—to such a man—to sell me! Oh, I rebelled, you may be sure; I cried, I implored. Every day it was held up before me that I would be the cause of my mother's disgrace, of the disgrace of her children, of her husband's threatened suicide, of their ruin and beggary and broken hearts. They did not hear me. They carried on the affair by letters. They would not let me see him, lest he should learn my unwillingness. I had reason to be unwilling. Oh, what is the use?" she cried, starting up and going to the window, where the rain and sleet beat so furiously. "What is the use? Yet—I my heart would not beat so! If it would cease beating altogether! Miss Twombly, I—I had a lover. I will not say much about him. I can't," she said, coming back to the fire.

"They knew nothing of it at home, for we met accidentally in a wood, and love seemed like a spark struck by mere chance, for I loved him from that moment. I loved him!" she cried again, as she saw my amazed look at this breaking down of all her barriers. "Yes, yes; I need not be ashamed of it. I loved him. She waited looking into the blaze. "All at once they precipitated the matter," she said hurriedly. "My stepfather (he had always been kind to me; I had known no other) stood before me the color of death; my mother hung on my neck, sobbing her soul out, the little children huddled together in terror at the unknown trouble. And I—oh, fool!—I grew colder and colder, like a corpse. It seemed to me that neither did I breathe nor my heart beat. What would my happiness be when brought by his misery? I cried out to bring him quickly before I repented. I never looked up when, a half hour afterward, he came in. I never spoke during the swift marriage, nor did he, for there were no words to repeat; we only bowed our heads in reply to the minister's questions and to receive his blessing. Blessing! Blessing! I could not see, not even the glitter of the ring; the lights were swimming before me; in a stupor, all I could think of was that I could not breathe either. Before the last word was well uttered I felt insensible. Oh, I had never waked!" she cried, wringing her hands. When I came to myself, she went on, after a moment, "the room was but dimly lighted; a physician at the door was saying something about congestion of the brain. My mother followed him out. It rushed over me, all that I had done, the bondage of my life, the desolation of my lover—oh, terribly! As my mother closed the door behind her, I sprang from the lounge, and caught up such of my clothes as had been removed, and in a fever of strength dashed out of the window. I made for the river; but when I saw its dark torrent I grew full of anger toward those who had driven me there. I seemed to hate them too much to drown myself. But I dropped my shawl there, to hurl it mislead them all. Oh, well, well, no matter about the rest. I found work at last, found this place! afterward with Mrs. Cameron; except for seasons of suffering, have been in the main at peace. And now—now—do you understand? I am the wife of a man whom I have never seen; but this man—this other—he will never let me go again. He—"

"Miss Murray! Do you mean—"

"Oh, I mean that Mr. Bassett was my lover?"

Just then at the door on the other side of the room came the imperative tap that I already recognized. I sprang to answer it; but as I opened the door, meaning to make excuse, and so refuse entrance, it was gently pushed out of my grasp, and Mr. Bassett came in. He walked directly to Margaret; but she rolled the chair between them, and stood leaning on its top, her head thrown back, her color high, the picture of beautiful defiance. His own face was radiant. "You are making a last stand," he said, holding out his arms.

Her eyes fell; she became pallid and tremulous; her voice shook. "I am here," she murmured, "because I can not help it."

"And you think I will take no advantage of it?" he cried. "Margaret! When I saw you in the storm, and a thunder-bolt seemed to have fallen at my feet, and the grave to have given up a ghost, and my heart stood still—when I saw you fall out there on the sea-weed, and scratched you in my arms, and had you held against my breast, do you suppose there was no wild plunging and rocking of that waking heart, no hot surging of my blood, after all those years of terror and torture, when you came like the resurrection of the dead? Do you suppose I would forego the fierce joy of those moments, as I walked up to this gate, for all of heaven? Do you suppose I will ever let you go again?"

But as she raised her eyes, full of suffering, and her trembling lips grew dry and white, he made haste to step toward her, and taking her hand to draw her round in spite of herself, and seat her in the chair. "My poor child," he said, "I will not try you, I will not trouble you. Listen, Margaret dear, while I tell you the truth in my own way. It is not so bad." He stood leaning one arm on the shelf, and looking down on her, the smile and the radiance still making his face splendid. "We all have grandfathers" he said, in a moment or two. "Mine was a

sailor wrecked in the Pacific seas. He married a child's daughter, a straight-haired, straight featured, dark-faced princess, beautiful as all her Oriental race. He acquired ascendancy over the simple islanders; they endowed him with vast fields and forests. When commerce found the island out, selling his ramic fibre and the dried meat of his cocoa-nuts to the French and German houses, who extract from it a precious oil, he accumulated an immense wealth. His son married the daughter of an American sea-captain from this region, and accumulated further wealth. I was their child and heir, and my wealth is still rolling up. I was educated in Europe, but these islands were my home. I returned there, and I was proud of them, of my noble and innocent islanders, and of my dark strain of chieftain's blood—the blood of Asiatic princes. It is but a strain; my brow is white as yours. Well, to hasten. Among my business correspondents was one who visited the island, talked to me incidentally of his family, and afterward, on his return, sent me a photograph of his daughter. I owe it to a vein of sentiment, perhaps, that I fell blindly in love with that picture. I wrote to the father for the daughter's hand, and offered him settlements that were riches to himself as well as to her. He bade me come on. I did so, my heart bounding with hope. But when I arrived I found by the dallying that there was trouble. I penetrated to the cause. I felt then that probably the girl would marry me, but would she ever love me? I determined to insure that first. I put myself in her way unknown—are you listening, Margaret? It ended as I wished. I believe she did love me. I shall see. But then, in some insanity, I feared, if she found me out, she might have a revulsion; perhaps I wanted to test her, perhaps I wanted to hear her glad cry of surprise when she learned that the husband she dreaded was the man she loved. I pushed the freak one step too far. Oh, Margaret, Margaret, my darling!" he cried, with trembling words, "do you know—do you know that I am your husband?"

The tears were shaking before my gaze like an old fool's, and I could only see him bending over her unresisting form, only see the light bursting from her eyes, and her arms suddenly lifted toward him, when I ran out of the room.

What a world it was that we looked out on the next morning!—sunshine vivid as the storm had been violent, azure heavens bending to azure seas that rolled in mighty yeasty billows clothed with rainbows, great cliffs framing the picture with their dark red shadows round which the birds were whirling. Mrs. Cameron was better, and coaches were at the door to take us into Desbars, where our steamer lay at the wharf with the rest of the party.

"Where is your young woman, Mrs. Cameron?" asked Dame Howison, as Mr. Bassett brought out his patient and wrapped the robes about her.

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Cameron, then, "My—"

"Why, Miss—Miss West's—her name, your companion?"

"She has become my companion, madame," said Mr. Bassett, with a bow, shutting the coach door. "Bon voyage." The whips cracked, the horses ploughed and were off. As we looked back and saw the husband and wife standing side by side in the sunshine, those not in the secret were speechless with amazement at the revelation that began to break upon them.

"Do I understand you that those two people—"

"Are married!" cried Belle. "Didn't I tell you that this house is as full of romantic surprises as the Castle in the Pyrenees? Married! And he has settled on her a hundred thousand cocoa-nut trees."

"Cocoa-nut-trees!" cried Miss Marvin, with her nose in the air.

"Cocoa-nut-trees. That is a hundred thousand great silver dollars a year—almost equal to your income, dear. I always knew she was a princess in disguise.

